

Cultural Connection

An Update on Cultural Competency

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The Importance of ADA and Self-Identification

A broad range of laws and regulations protect the rights of people with disabilities. The American's Disability Act (ADA), of 1990 was developed to give rights to persons with disabilities that are similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, religion and national origin. Title I of the ADA focuses on employment and Title II focuses on access to public services. Yet, it is interesting to note that many who suffer from and live with a number of physical and mental disabilities shy away from self-identifying such disabilities to their employers for a number of reasons.

Myra Kanter knows all too well the fears of self-identifying as a consumer of mental health services. Myra, a registered nurse since 1979, did not discuss her Major Depressive Disorder with the County of Orange when she first applied in 1995 as a mental health nurse. "I wanted to get the job on my own", she states, "no special treatment. I suffered for years with bouts of Depression, and I had a family history of mental illness. Then, while I was working on my master's degree in Nursing, I became severely depressed. My parents, not understanding that mental illness was the underlying

cause of my bazaar behaviors, threw me out." Myra traveled from Pennsylvania to California, where she lived in her car for six months before she *ever* received treatment.

Myra was diagnosed and began treatment, and worked in a number of private, acute facilities for persons suffering from mental illnesses. Then she applied to the County. "It has been a very positive experience working for the County. I enjoyed being an outpatient care coordinator more than working in an acute care setting. I got to know the consumers on my caseload as *people* — all the various dimensions of their lives — and I got to help them put it all back together."

Myra has worked on psychiatric units in outpatient clinics and administration. Eventually, she became more and more proactive because of her own personal experiences, and ended up in the Patient's Rights Office of the County of Orange, as a Patient's Rights Advocate. "I ensure the rights of Orange County consumers".

"A lot of people see ADA as giving us an unfair advantage". But the law itself is very clear. It protects qualified persons with disabilities from discrimination in hiring and

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Pictured from left to right: Julie Poulson, Rafael D. Canul, Ronnie Kelley, Michael Schumacher

Cultural Competency's One Year Anniversary

It's been one year since Cultural Competency has been around as a program for Behavioral Health Services. We held an open house on April 6th to celebrate this occasion which was met with a great deal of enthusiasm. We would like to thank everyone who joined us for this celebration and shared in our festivities. The open house welcomed visitors to familiarize themselves with the offices, resources and the staff of Cultural Competency. People toured the Cultural Competency library and were acquainted to the work that Cultural Competency performs for Behavioral Health Services. Our guests were treated to refreshments and a variety of foods from around the world. The festive atmosphere featured cultural music that was played simultaneously in the different offices and food stations. Ronnie Kelley, Service Chief for Cultural Competency, displayed a "cultural living museum"

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Editorial Spotlight

“An Open Letter from the Heart”

I appreciate the opportunity to share my ideas or observations regarding the Cultural Competency office. As a member of the Orange County Mental Health Advisory Board, I have become acquainted with Ronnie Kelley and Dr. Rafael Canul. They make me aware of the many issues involved when people are dealing with mental illness and people from other cultures. As the mother of a young woman who was diagnosed with schizophrenia eight years ago, at the age of fifteen, I can remember those first months and years of fear and sadness. The kind professionals who worked with us, and still do, were instrumental to our ability to cope as a family, to understand our daughter and the issues with which she was dealing. We were made aware that we are Maura's family, not her therapists. But at times, it helps so much to have an insight into the best reaction to a situation, a true but non-confronting way to put things, words to use. It is more important for me to zero in on what she is feeling about her conversation than the exact words.

I was born and raised in California but my dad was a first generation American whose parents were born in the Basque country of Viscaya, Spain. I feel a kinship to the Hispanic community but through teaching, I've learned much about others - particularly the Asians and Pacific Islander people. I think the most important thing is to remember that while there are many cultural differences, families are made everywhere of enduring, passionate love.

Having bright, informed people to help us is so important. The pain I felt hearing my daughter cry for her dad and me all the way down the hall to the hospital elevator - is the same intense pain felt by other moms who have been through that same long walk. And as we do get through it and many other walks down other corridors with the help of loving, wise professionals. They make all of us aware of the subtle ways in which we misinterpret each other.

Through the efforts of the Cultural Competency office, we can all concentrate on the big issues of living life as well as possible with all of its wonders and flaws. Best wishes to all of you.

Paula A Fitzgerald

Fountain Valley

*Member***O.C. Mental Health Advisory Board***NAMI - OC,***Board of Directors**

“ I think the most important thing is to remember that while there are many cultural differences, families are made everywhere of enduring, passionate love. ”





The Biracial Experience

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO PARENTS OF BIRACIAL CHILDREN

I remember when I was 5 years old, wondering why other kids at school didn't always understand the words I used, or made fun of the food I brought for lunch. I remember vividly attempting to seek out friends who resembled me, and being unable to find any. I remember, and often times still experience, feelings of being unsettled and even lost. I self identify as biracial. I am the child of an Irish American man and a Filipino woman.. Hindsight being 20/20, childhood had definite obstacles for me that were different than the other kids in my neighborhood. Although many children are the product of multi-cultural unions (the "Heinz-57's", if you will, a blending of German and Russian paternity with Irish and Scottish maternity), being biracial is more specific; a person who by virtue of their biological parents' racial identities are of two distinctly different racial backgrounds (Gibbs,1989). It has been estimated that there are at least 1,161,000 interracial married couples and 1 million biracial persons in the U.S. (US Census ,1990). Therefore, the issues of raising biracial kids today needs much more scrutiny than it currently gets.

"I was more concerned about having children that wouldn't be accepted by either race than I was about being in an interracial marriage", states Marcie, a Caucasian woman married to an African American man.

The interesting thing to note is that biracial children have unique stressors. One in particular is that one of a biracial child's cultures is usually more valued by society than the other. Biracial children must learn how to bridge both the majority and minority cultures and they must do this on their own,. Their parents have not had to contend with such issues. Many biracial children feel pressure from society to "choose" one culture over the other, which can cause both crisis and alienation.

There are a number of key elements to remember when dealing with a biracial child. Biracial identity, as with self- identity is guided and enriched by families that are intact and that can openly communicate. Other factors include:

- ◉ **Living in integrated neighborhoods:** this allows biracial children to have the opportunity to see and interact with other cultures and increases the probability that they will also find other biracial playmates.
- ◉ **Attending integrated schools:** this allows more of an opportunity to see other children who may resemble themselves, or parts of themselves.
- ◉ **Exposure to both racial heritages:**

there is no need to choose one over the other. Children need to know who they are; the rich history of all their people. This type of pride in self acts as a protectant for the soul, improves self esteem and can insulate the child from harmful influences, such as drug use, etc..

- ◉ **Experiencing a range of ethnic activities and role models:** this doesn't mean that biracial Asian and Caucasian kids should only attend cultural events that pertain to their own heritage. Certainly exposure to one's own heritage in the form of a culture event is important but exposure to all types of cultures demonstrates an openness and acceptance of diversity.

“Other kids at school didn't always understand the words I used, or made fun of the food I brought for lunch...”



The 22nd North America Vietnamese Games

By Dana Nguyen, M.A.

For the very first time since its inception in 1971, the North America Vietnamese (NAV) Summer Games will be held here in Orange County. This four-day event, which begins on July 1st and ends on July 4th, will give individuals of Vietnamese descent an opportunity to compete in a variety of sporting events; including soccer, basketball, volleyball, golf, tennis, badminton, swimming, track and field, ping-pong and racquetball.

The first NAV Summer Game was held in Montreal, Canada in 1971. Since then, other major cities throughout the United States and Canada have hosted this event, with increasing participation and attendance by each year. This year's Games will undoubtedly bring in more participants and spectators than any of the previous 21 Games, as Orange County is home to over 300,000 Vietnamese-Americans.

According to Hoa Bao, President of Southeast Asia Sports (a non-profit organization in California responsible for organizing this year's Games), the purpose of the NAV Summer Games is to encourage and to inspire Vietnamese traditions and values through athletic competitions for people of all ages. The organizers expect that between 1,000-1,500 men, women and children will compete this year. A special addition to this year's Games will be the one-mile walk for adults over the age of 55 and for children under the age of 12. The idea behind this event is to involve older Vietnamese adults and children from the community who may otherwise be excluded from these types of cultural activities. In the one-mile walk, participants can walk alone or in a team. The organizers hope that the team walk will offer an opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren (or any older adult and child) to bond through this joint experience. As in the other sport-

ing events, there is a \$7.00 registration fee for the one-mile walk. All participants in this event will receive an award for completing the walk.

Mr. Bao states that Dat Nguyen of the Dallas Cowboys, the first Vietnamese-American professional football player, is scheduled to make a special appearance this year. In addition, famous Vietnamese singer and song-writer, Trinh Nam Son, is writing a theme song for the event. A special concert, which includes music and a traditional fashion show will be held at California State University, Fullerton on the second night of the event. A list of famous Vietnamese singers, including Nhu Quynh, is scheduled to be there to entertain the crowd.

As Vietnamese-Americans are generally known for our academic and business abilities, and not for our athletic abilities, this event will give the community an opportunity to see how diverse, multi-talented, and acculturated we are as an ethnic group. This event, hopefully, will also inspire young Vietnamese-Americans to get

involved in sports and to be proud of their heritage.

For more information about the 22nd North Vietnamese Games, you can go to www.Southeastasiasports.com or call Dana Nguyen at (714) 796-0193.

“A list of famous Vietnamese singers, including Nhu Quynh, is scheduled to be [at California State University, Fullerton] to entertain the crowd.”





Spotlight on Excellence

Congratulations to Kim Nguyen Phan, Ph.D., For Achieving Cultural Competency Excellence!

Dr. Phan is a bilingual clinical psychologist for Children & Youth Services (CYS) in West Region since 1998. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of California, Irvine and the United States International University (USIU). Prior to her transfer to CYS, Dr. Phan worked for nine years as a Senior Social Worker in the various programs within the County of Orange's Social Services Agency, Children and Family Services. Her interests in Asian-Americans began in the early 1970's when she came to the United States as an exchange student. She received her Bachelor (1973) and Master's Degree (1977) in Sociology from the University of Kansas. While in Kansas, Dr. Phan met and married her husband, Sonny. They now have two beautiful, smart and athletic children.

From 1980-1987, Dr. Phan worked as a licensed social worker in Sandusky, Ohio with terminally-ill patients and with victims of rape, assault, abuse/neglect, and substance abuse. She and her family then moved to California in 1988 where she worked as a consultant, specializing in Asian-Americans. Dr. Phan started working for the County of Orange since 1989 as a social worker.

While maintaining full-time employment with the County, Dr. Phan went back to school to earn her doctorate degree in clinical psychology in 1998. Although she specializes in treating Asian-American consumers, Dr. Phan is very competent and knowledgeable about working with individuals from all different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to her academic and professional accomplishments, Dr. Phan is very active in the Vietnamese community. She is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the Acculturation Services of Vietnamese Social Services Community Center. Dr. Phan is involved with the First Vietnamese Handicapped Support Group and the Vietnamese-American Youth Forum/Pacific Asian Center. She was the recipient of the Appreciation Award from the Multi-Cul-

tural Task Force of County of Orange Social Services Agency.

Friends and colleagues all agree that Dr. Phan is one of the friendliest and most supportive people they know. Dr. Casey Dorman, who chaired Dr. Phan's dissertation at USIU and is now a close friend, says she was "one of our best students, and was popular among her peers." Tuan Nguyen, who works with Dr. Phan at the Westminster Clinic, describes her as an "excellent co-worker, very outgoing and sociable."

Spotlight on Excellence

Do you work with someone who exemplifies Cultural Competency? Someone who is both sensitive and respectful to persons of all cultures, whether colleague or consumer? If so, the Cultural Competency Department would like to formally acknowledge these individuals.

Please fill out the necessary information and pony it back to us and we'll make sure this employee or consumer gets acknowledged in our next newsletter. Our pony address is 38-P.

Thank you.

Name: _____

Work address/Pony address: _____

Discipline: _____

Why you believe he/she is Culturally Competent: _____

Example of dedication to Cultural Competency: _____



Cultural Events Calendar

Event	<p>June 24-25, 2000 Total Women Expo Location: Anaheim Convention Center Admission: \$7.00</p>	<p>Information: American Mega Shows at (626) 961-3782</p>
Event	<p>July 1 - 4, 2000 22nd North American Vietnamese Games - 1 mile walk for Vietnamese seniors Location: Garden Grove High School Information: Hoa Bao (626) 573-5605</p>	
Event	<p>July 4, 2000 Arts on Wheels - crazy 4th of July parade and wacky floats to celebrate our independence. Location: Santora Arts Building</p>	<p>Information: 714-834-0688</p>
Event	<p>July 25th - 28th 2000 Youth Development / Resiliency Sponsor: Orange County Department of Education Location: U.C. San Diego</p>	<p>Contact: Linda Kearns (714) 825-0197</p>
Event	<p>July 14 - 30, 2000 Orange County Fair Location: Orange County Fairgrounds Information: (714) 708-FAIR Ext. 3247</p>	
Event	<p>July 31st - August 4, 2000 Summer Institute for Addiction and Prevention Studies Sponsors: Western CAPT, University of Nevada, Reno Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies, and the Nevada Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Location: Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada Cost: \$165/ half week or \$250/week</p>	<p>Information: Gretchen Casey (888) 734-7476</p>
Event	<p>August 11-13, 2000 National Teen Leadership Program Location: Cal State San Bernardino (Southern California)</p>	<p>Information: (916) 565-1950 Outside California: (800) 550-1950 http://www.teenleader.org/teenleader/program_dates.shtml</p>
Lecture	<p>August 15 - 19, 2000 "National Gang Violence Conference" by California Gang Investigators Association Location: Anaheim, CA</p>	<p>Information: (888) 229-2442 or www.hitech.com/cgia/conference.htm</p>

FAQ about Aging—Series II



- Q1:** The numbers of older people are growing.
- Q2:** The vast majority of older people are self-sufficient.
- Q3:** Mental confusion is an inevitable, incurable consequence of old age.

**(T or F
QUESTIONS)**

See next page for answers



ANTI-BIAS FACILITATORS NEEDED

The Anti-Defamation League is recruiting facilitators for A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute's anti-bias education and diversity programs.

If you are interested in becoming a facilitator for the ADL's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute, please forward your resume to:

Gary Levine
Assistant Director
Anti-Defamation League
959 South Coast Drive, Ste. 374
Costa Mesa, Ca 92626
Fax: (714)979-4138
e-mail: levig@adl.org
Telephone: (714)979-4733

(Continued from p.1) One Year Anniversary

of her Filipino heritage that was highlighted by clothing dating back more than one hundred years. Cultural Competency staff wore authentic "cultural garb" to celebrate their individual heritages. We will continue to do this challenging and exciting work for Behavioral Health Services. We hope you to visit us anytime!

(Continued from p.1)

The Importance of ADA

promotion, pay, job training, benefits, referrals and all other aspects of employment. ADA does not give unfair advantages; it helps create a level playing field. Many times one of the most healthful things a mental health consumer can do is to establish some sense of "normalcy" in their lives, for Myra, work was that normalcy. "It definitely helped my mental health to keep working. I have had periods of relapse and getting back to work helped me regain stability.

Myra at first kept her illness and doctor's appointments, etc. to herself, but as she became closer and more trusting of her peers, she began to self-disclose. Eventually, she shared her mental health history with the

County and was offered a position in Patients Rights. Perhaps in part, due to her keen insight into the experiences of consumers, as well as her clinical skills. "I relate well with clients. I hear their words and a whole lot more. When they share their experiences, I know exactly what they're talking about, as I've had the same experiences myself. That personal validation adds a whole new and vast dimension to the service of caring and healing. It makes a big difference when the client knows that the person across the desk has been there themselves. They can look in your eyes and find affirmation for their experiences with these devastating illnesses. Yes, it helps a lot."

The essential thing to note is that not all

of those who suffer with a disability self identify. Not all of those whom we work with day in and day out self-identify. The things we say and do with regard to our consumers certainly shapes whether a co-worker will feel safe enough to "come out". "When I worked in the private sector," stated Kanter, staff would say ugly, disparaging things about clients. I think that is one of the biggest reasons that people don't self-disclose. They fear utter abandonment by their friends and colleagues—I know I did." Perhaps we can all learn something from Myra's own experiences and support our fellow co-workers by truly embracing humanistic principles and the ADA as it was intended.

FAQ about Aging (ANSWERS)



- A1:** True. Today, 12 percent of the U.S. Population are 65 or older. By the year 2030, one in five people will be over 65 years of age.
- A2:** True. Only 5 percent of the older population live in nursing homes; the rest are basically healthy and self-sufficient.
- A3:** False. Mental confusion and serious forgetfulness in old age can be caused by Alzheimer's disease or other conditions which cause incurable damage to the brain, but some 100 other problems can cause the same symptoms. A minor head injury, a high fever, poor nutrition, adverse drug reactions and depression can all be treated and the confusion will be cured.





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